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OPENING STATEMENT AT COP-6

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AOSIS was formed in 1990 to protect the interests of the most vulnerable group of countries to climate change - the small island developing states. Spread across the Indian, Pacific, Caribbean and Atlantic Oceans, our members now comprise 43 countries and territories: 39 of these are Parties to the FCCC thus representing almost one-third of the G-77 & China with whom we share fundamental concerns.

Continued emissions threaten our very existence as explained this morning by Dr. Watson. Most of our members are highly vulnerable to the increased sea level rise – the entire territories of ten of our members are below 1metre. And all of our countries have vulnerable coastal zones where our people live and work.

AOSIS members are the “frontline” states in every sense. We now suffer and expect to suffer in the most direct way the full range of climate impacts – increased cyclones, hurricanes, typhoons and coral bleaching among them. All are increasing in their seriousness, frequency and intensity. It is impossible to cope adequately. Our abilities are too limited, far too limited. And it is not just these direct extreme climatic events that confront and will affect us. There are the economic effects – such as disruptions to our fisheries industries, our water supplies which will be affected by salt-water contamination, and our tourism resorts.

We have been participating in these negotiations for ten years - consistently pressing for countries to pay heed to the many scientists warnings and conclusions that we are putting at risk the ecological future of our planet. Waiting for proof will mean the certain destruction of our countries. Yet – despite adoption of the precautionary principle as the basis of international responses to tackle climate change – we are still waiting for Annex I Parties to demonstrate their willingness to reduce, or even limit, their emissions of greenhouse gases. The latest emissions data submitted by Annex I Parties in their

inventories confirm the same ~~dismal~~ lack of effective policies to tackle emissions of the main culprit - CO2 from fossil fuel.

The Convention contains a clear commitment for Annex I Parties to stabilize their emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000. Weak as it is, our countries consider this a legally binding treaty commitment and a high moral responsibility. The fact is that only a handful of countries have managed to lower their emissions – due more to changed economic circumstances rather than deliberate climate policy. Other industrialized countries are for the most part reporting that they have taken measures, but we have not seen these actually achieve much in terms of reductions. Rather, more than half of Annex I countries (21 countries in fact) and most Annex II Parties (20 of them) are reporting increases in aggregate GHG emissions between 1990 and 1998.

We will hear much in this conference about the difficulties and the compliance costs of Annex I Parties. But we fear that not much will be said about the costs that we, and other vulnerable developing countries will bear as a result on their continued inaction. The Convention was supposed to ensure that the poor and vulnerable would not have to shoulder the burden of coping with the devastating impacts of climate change alone. Yet the lack of emissions reductions on the one hand, and the paucity of finances for frontline states for adaptation on the other hand, leave us with diminishing hope. Annex I Parties continue to reject extension of the adaptation levy to all the mechanisms and to resist ^{what we regard as} entirely legitimate proposals to improve capacity building and provision of adaptation and other technologies to help us cope with climate change

Our discussion is at a crucial point in time. We have before us the very basic framework for establishing the rules and regulations to ensure that countries are actually doing ^{and will achieve} what they have pledged themselves to do. Our experience with the Convention makes clear that we must establish credible institutions and procedures to hold Parties to account if they attempt to avoid delivering on their Kyoto commitments. This Conference must ~~ensure this..~~ ^{not miss the vital opportunity of this session to do exactly that.}